

Grace Darling

by Tim Vicary

(Adapted book. Elementary level)

The Times

London, 19th September 1838

On the afternoon of 6th September, the steamship Forfarshire began its journey from Hull to Dundee, in Scotland. There were 60 people on the Forfarshire, which was a big, comfortable, modern ship. There was a strong, north-east wind that afternoon, but at first no one was afraid.,,

Chapter 1. The Forfarshire

Daniel Donovan was a passenger on the Forfarshire. He stood on the deck of the ship, and looked at the sea. It was difficult to stand on the deck, because the wind was so strong. The ship was moving up and down uncomfortably and Daniel felt ill. Then a big wave hit the side of the ship, and salt water flew into his face.

‘The wind is getting stronger,’ said a passenger beside Him, He was a tall, dark man with a black coat - Mr Robb, a churchman. ‘And it’s getting darker, too.’

‘Yes,’ said Daniel. ‘I can’t see the land now.’ He looked to the west, but he could see no land, no lights. Only water - big grey waves with white tops, which went up and down, up and down.

‘But the Forfarshire is a good modern ship,’ said Mr Robb. ‘Nothing can happen to a new ship like this. Listen to those fine strong engines!’

Daniel looked down at the big paddle wheel on the side of the ship. It went round and round, down under the white water, and up again ... under the water, and up. Then he looked up at the black smoke which came from the Forfarshire's funnel.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘They’re good, strong engines.’ But he was not really sure. He was an engineer, so he knew about engines. Sometimes

the Forfarshire's engines made strange noises, and the paddle wheels went round slowly. Then there was a crash, and they went quickly again. Daniel was not happy.

A sea bird flew low across the white tops of the big, grey waves, Daniel watched it, and felt wind and rain on his face. Then a door opened behind him, and a woman screamed.

‘Simon, come back! Come back at once!’

Daniel looked behind him, and saw a small boy. He was running across the deck. He was only three or four years old, and the wind was much too strong for him. He fell over on the deck and began to cry. Then another big wave hit the side of the ship. The white water came over the side and carried the boy along the deck.

‘Help!’ the woman screamed. ‘Save my child!’

Daniel put out a hand and caught the boy’s coat. Then he carried him quickly back to his mother.

‘Quick! Get back in, out of the wind, woman!’ he shouted. He hurried through the door and closed it with a crash. ‘It’s too dangerous for children out there!’

‘Yes, I know,’ the woman said. ‘Come here, Simon!’ She sat down and held the boy with one arm. She had another child in her other arm - a little girl, about one or two years old. ‘Thank you, sir,’ she said.

The ship moved up and down very quickly, and Daniel sat down beside the woman. She smiled at him, but she looked very white and ill.

‘I’m Daniel Donovan,’ he said. ‘What’s your name?’ ‘Mary Dawson,’ she said. ‘This is my son Simon, and my daughter Sarah.’

‘Isn’t your husband with you?’

‘No,’ she said. ‘He’s in Scotland. We’re going home to see him. It’s good we’re in a strong, modern ship.’

‘Yes,’ said Daniel. Then for a few seconds he said nothing. It was quiet in this room. Much quieter than outside.

‘Mr Donovan,’ said Mrs Dawson suddenly. ‘What’s happened to the engines? I can’t hear them now. Can you?’

Daniel listened. ‘My God,’ he thought. ‘She’s right! The engines have stopped!’ He could hear the noise of the wind and the sea, but not

the engines. 'You're right, Mrs Dawson,' he said. He stood up, and ran to the door. 'Excuse me, I...' But then he opened the door, and his words were lost in the wind.

Outside, he looked up at the ship's funnel. There was no smoke above it. He looked over the side of the ship, at the big paddle wheels. He watched them for two minutes, but they did not move. And all the time the big grey waves lifted the Forfarshire up and down, and white water blew over the deck.

'What's happening?' screamed Mr Robb. 'Why aren't we moving?'

'The engines have broken down!' shouted Donovan. 'This isn't a sailing ship - it can't move without its engines!'

A big wave hit the side of the paddle wheel and sent white water over their heads. Some sailors were trying to put up a small sail, but the wind blew it out of their hands, away across the sea into the night.

'There are women and children on this ship,' shouted Mr Robb. 'It's nearly dark, and the weather is getting worse. What can we do?'

Daniel looked at him. 'I don't know, my friend,' he shouted back. 'I can't do anything. Why not ask God - you're a churchman! Perhaps He'll send an angel to save us!'

Chapter 2. The Lighthouse

When the engines stopped, the Forfarshire was about five kilometres east of St Abbs Head, in Scotland. The ship was travelling north, from Hull to Dundee. But the wind came from the north, so the Forfarshire, without her engines, began to go south again, back to England. It was dark, and the wind was very strong.

About thirty kilometres south-east of St Abbs Head is a group of small rocky islands not far from the mainland. These are the Fame Islands. On one of them, Longstone Island, there is a lighthouse. There were three people in the lighthouse that night - William Darling, his wife Thomasin, and their daughter Grace. Grace's brothers were usually there too, but that night they were in Bamburgh, on the mainland.

At seven o'clock that night, William Darling went up the long stairs of the lighthouse to light the big oil lantern. Grace went with him. William Darling was a thin, strong man about fifty years old. He moved quickly and quietly. He had a candle in his hand. Sometimes he turned to talk to Grace, and the candlelight lit up the big brown eyes in his kind, old face.

Grace was a young woman about twenty-two years old. She was not very tall or strong. She had big brown eyes like her father, and soft brown hair. She carried an oil can in one hand, and held the side of her long skirts with the other hand. She smiled at her father while they talked.

At the top of the lighthouse Grace and her father came into a small room. This room had no walls - just big windows all around. The noise of the wind and rain was terrible here, and they had to shout to hear each other.

Grace put oil in the big lantern in the middle of the room, and William lit it. When the lantern was burning, the big silver mirrors began to move slowly around it. William Darling and his daughter stood and watched them. The rain crashed against the windows, and the wind screamed like an animal in the night.

'God help the poor sailors to see this light,' shouted William, 'It's as dark as death out there. No moon, no stars - nothing but wind and rain and wild white water.'

'Let us pray there are no ships near the rocks,' shouted Grace. 'The storm will wreck any ship that comes near them tonight.'

'That's true, lass,' said William. 'But we can do no more now. Let's go down to supper.'

The father and daughter went slowly down the dark, narrow stairs to the kitchen. Grace's mother, Thomasin, was putting the supper on the table. She was a white-haired woman of sixty-five.

'Did you see anything?' she asked.

'No, my love, nothing,' William answered. 'Only the rain on the windows.'

‘Thank God,’ she said. ‘You couldn't help anyone tonight, William. If there is a shipwreck, you can do nothing. The boys aren't here.’

‘But, mother,’ Grace said. ‘Father has to try to save people. It's his job. He can't leave them to die.’

‘Grace, no man could row a boat by himself in this wild sea,’ said Thomasin. ‘So let us thank God that there are no poor ships near us, on this terrible night.’

‘Yes, Grace, let us thank God for that,’ said William. And so the three people sat quietly around their table in the warm kitchen, and put their hands together to pray, In the black night outside, the wind screamed, and the big waves crashed against the rocks, again and again and again.

Chapter 3. In the Engine Room

‘Mr Donovan!’

‘Yes.’

‘The captain wants to see you. You're an engineer, aren't you? Come this way, please.’ The sailor opened a door and Daniel went quickly inside. They went down some stairs. He opened another door, and a great cloud of steam came out. Daniel followed the young sailor into the room. It was very hot in here, and there were clouds of steam everywhere. A tall, red-faced man came up to him.

‘Mr Donovan? My name's Humble, Captain Humble. We need you, sir. You're an engineer, I understand. One of these engines has already stopped, and the other is working very badly. There's too much steam in this room, sir, and not...’

A big wave hit the ship with a terrible crash and Daniel, Captain Humble and the young sailor held onto the wall. Daniel saw a big man in a blue coat, and shouted to him.

‘Are you the ship's engineer?’

‘Yes!’ The man looked angry, tired, and frightened.

‘What's the matter? Why has this engine stopped?’

‘Why? Because it’s too old, of course! Look here! See this? And this...’ For five minutes the two engineers moved around in the steam and smoke, and looked at the big engines.

‘See? It’s broken here, and here! How can I mend it now, in the middle of a storm? Can you do that, sir?’

Daniel shook his head. He was angry and frightened. ‘No, of course I can’t! The ship must go back to land!’

The man agreed quickly. That’s right, that’s what I say! But you tell Captain Humble that! He says this a new, modern ship, so it can go anywhere, in any weather! Our rich passengers want to go to Scotland, so that’s where we’re going, he says! But it’s too dangerous and...’

The man stopped when Captain Humble came near. ‘Well, Mr Donovan? Can you help us? Do you know more about engines than this stupid engineer here? He says he can do nothing, and we must go back to Hull, because of a small storm! But I’m sure...’

‘He’s right, Captain Humble!’ shouted Daniel. ‘I can do nothing for these engines here, in this storm! They’re too old, and this one is broken in three places! We must go back to land, Captain, or we will all drown! I cannot help you!’

‘Gaaaaaargh!’ The captain pushed Daniel angrily away from him. ‘Then get out of my way, Mr Donovan - you’re no good to me! Get back to the women and children!’

Daniel went quickly to the door, and up the stairs to the wind and rain outside. But he was a badly frightened man. His hands were shaking, and it was hard for him to stand in the terrible screaming wind. Above his head, two sailors were putting up a small sail. ‘That’s no good,’ he thought. ‘It’s too small for a big ship like this. Without engines, we can do nothing.’

He stared out to sea, but he could see nothing - only the white tops of the great black waves, and the black clouds above. No stars, no moon. But - far away to the south west - there was a little light flashing. On ... off ... on ... off. It went behind a wave, and then came back again, like a star in the night sky, far away.

But it was coming nearer. Nearer all the time.

Chapter 4. Nothing to See

It was half past two in the morning. In the lighthouse, Grace was asleep in her room. It was a small, tidy room, with white walls. Her dress was on the back of the door, and her other clothes were on a chair by the bed. There were some books on a desk, and some sea-birds' eggs on a table.

Someone knocked at the door. 'Grace!' her father's voice called. 'Wake up, lass. I need you to help me.'

'What is it, father?' She got up quickly, and opened the door. William Darling stood there with a candle in his hand. He was wearing his big black coat and heavy boots, and his hat was pulled down over his ears. His face was tired, and wet with rain.

The storm is worse. The wind is coming from the north now, and it's stronger. We shall have to go outside and tie the boat down, or we shall lose it!

'All right. I'll be down in a minute.' Quickly, Grace closed the door and put her clothes on. She often got up in the night. There was always work on a lighthouse, and the sea did not wait for morning. A minute later, she ran downstairs to the kitchen, put a coat over her thin dress, tied her hair under her hat, and followed her father out into the night.

The wind nearly lifted her off her feet. It was strong, black, hard, and wet. She opened her mouth to call to her father, but the words blew away into the night. Her coat and dress blew out behind her like paper, and the rain hit her face, like small stones.

She walked slowly after her father, to the boathouse. Her father was carrying a small lantern, and in its light Grace saw a great wave of white water. It broke against the rock in front of the boathouse, and white water crashed against the boathouse doors. William shouted something to Grace but she could not hear him - the sounds of the wind and the sea were too loud, too terrible.

In the boathouse, she helped her father tie the boat down to the rock. They tied down the oars, too, so that nothing could move them. Then they ran outside and carried everything into the kitchen - their chickens, their fishing things. Nothing could stay outside on a night like this.

Before they went back in, Grace stared out into the night. The light from the top of the lighthouse flashed out over the water, and for thirty seconds she could see very well. One after another, the big, black waves came out of the darkness - waves ten, twenty metres high! When they hit the rock there was a huge crash, and white water flew everywhere, thirty, forty metres up over the Longstone rock.

Grace stared out, over the waves, past the rocks and islands. But - thank God! - she could see no lights, no ships. No ship could live in that sea tonight.

‘Grace! Come on in, lass!’ Her father held the door open behind her. She went in quickly, and he closed the door behind them. Her mother had warm drinks ready for them.

‘Go to bed now, father,’ Grace said. ‘You’ve had no sleep yet tonight. I’ll watch the light now, and mother can come up at five.’

‘All right, lass,’ he said. William was very tired. He went upstairs with his wife, and in two minutes they were asleep.

Grace finished her drink quickly, and changed out of her wet clothes. Then she went up alone to the room with the big windows at the top of the lighthouse. The wild wind screamed, and shook the glass.

It was half past three in the morning.

Chapter 5. The Shipwreck

In the passengers’ sitting room on the Forfarshire Mrs Dawson looked unhappily at Daniel, Mr Robb, and two other men - Thomas Buchanan and James Kelly. Her two children were crying in her arms. ‘I’m so frightened. Do you think we’re going to die? What can we do, Mr Donovan, without the engines?’

‘Not much, Mrs Dawson,’ said Daniel slowly. ‘But there are some islands, south of here, called the Fame Islands. They are very near. I’ve seen the lighthouse flashing on them. I think the captain is trying to go into the quieter water between the islands and the mainland, I ... I’ll go outside again, to see how near the lighthouse is. I’ll come back and tell you.’

Daniel got up and went out into the night. It was raining hard now, and the wind was screaming from the back of the ship. He stared into the dark. He could see nothing in the west. Where was the light? He walked carefully across the ship, to the other side. Suddenly he fell on the wet deck, and he caught the side of the ship with his hands. Then he looked up, and a light lashed into his eyes. There it was - the lighthouse, only three hundred metres away, to the north!

‘But this is wrong!’ he thought. ‘We’re too close! Much too close! I must tell the captain!’

He stood up and began to run along the deck. But there in front of him, a great mountain of white water flew into the sky ... ten ... twenty metres above the ship,

‘Rocks!’ screamed Daniel. ‘Rocks! There are rocks in front of us, rocks all round! Captain! CAPTAIN!’

The captain was already shouting at the sailors, and the ship was turning, turning to the west, away from the light. But it was too late. There was a great crash, and Daniel and all the sailors fell to the deck. Then another crash ... and another. The waves lifted the Forfarshire and threw it onto the rock, like a child playing with a toy.

Daniel held onto a rope, and stared into the dark. The light flashed again from the lighthouse. Then he looked back along the ship. People were running out onto the deck, and screaming.

Then another very big wave hit the ship. White water flew everywhere, and fell on Daniel like stones. He heard a terrible crash, and more water fell on him. He opened his eyes, and looked back along the ship.

But there was nothing there.

Nothing but black water, and more waves. The ship was broken in two, and the back of the ship, with the captain and all the rich passengers, was not there.

A voice shouted into the wind. 'God help us! Save us from the sea, oh God!' The door of the passengers' room was broken. But there were still some people inside the room - Mr Robb, Mrs Dawson and her two children, Mr Buchanan, and James Kelly, Mr Robb was praying loudly.

Daniel went carefully back along the deck to the broken door. He put out his hand to touch it, and then a wall of white water hit the ship, and he could see nothing.

Chapter 6. Out of the Window

At twenty to five that morning, Grace felt a hand on her face. It was her mother. Grace was nearly asleep. The wind was screaming and shaking the big windows, and Thomasin Darling had to shout.

'Go to bed, Grace! It's nearly morning, I'll look after the lantern now.'

'All right, mother' Grace got up slowly and went downstairs to her bedroom, It was much quieter in her room because of the strong stone walls. She looked at the birds' eggs on her table, the books on the desk near the bed. The bed looked warm and comfortable. She smiled, and began to get undressed.

A little grey light was coming in through the window, 'It's nearly morning,' she thought. 'I'll look at the sea, before I go to sleep.'

She walked to the window and looked out, But she could see nothing, because of the salt and rain on the glass. 'It doesn't matter,' she thought. 'I'm too tired. I'll go to bed.'

But before she went to bed, she prayed. And when she prayed, she heard a voice in her head. 'Go to the window, Grace,' it said. 'Go and look out.'

So she got up, went to the window, and opened it. The wind blew strongly into the room. It blew her hair across her face, and some books

fell on the floor. In the grey morning light, Grace looked out across the sea.

Most of the rocks and small islands were under water. Big white waves were breaking over them. The sea was wild, frightening, terrible. Grace looked, and felt cold. She could not remember a storm as bad as this. She thought of her warm bed, and began to close the window.

Then she saw the ship.

It was a big ship, on Harker's Rock, about three hundred metres away to the south west. A very big ship, but it was broken in two, with white water breaking all over it. Grace could not see it very well, because of the rain and the sea,

'Father! Father! Come quick!' She ran out of the room, down the stairs to her parents' bedroom. 'Come quick! There's a ship on Harker's Rock! A big one - a passenger ship! It's broken in two!'

William Darling was out of bed in a second. He put on his boots and coat and followed Grace up the stairs. 'Did you see any people?'

'No, father, But it's difficult to see anything in this wild sea.'

Her father took a telescope from his pocket and stared out of Grace's window at the wreck of the Forfarshire. He looked for a long time, then said: 'I can see no one, but my eyes are old. You look, lass.'

Grace stared carefully through the telescope. White water crashed over the wreck. Sometimes the ship moved on the rock, and sometimes pieces of wood fell off into the sea. But she saw no people.

'No, father. I think they have all drowned.'

'Poor, poor people.'

'Yes, but it's a good thing too, William.' Grace's mother was in the room now, and she was looking out of the window with her husband and daughter.

'Why is that, Thomasin?' William asked her.

'Why? Because the boys aren't here, William. You couldn't take a boat out in that wild sea alone. No one could. If there are people alive on that ship now, you cannot save them, William.'

'I could go with him, mother,' said Grace quietly.

'Not in a sea like that, Grace,' her mother said.

Her father said nothing.

‘We mustn’t stop looking,’ said Grace. ‘If there is someone alive, we can’t just leave them to die.’

And so, for the next two hours, Grace and her parents watched the wreck of the Forfarshire through the telescope. Slowly, daylight came. But they saw no people ... only rain, and waves, and a broken ship in the wild angry sea.

Chapter 7. On Marker’s Rock

There were twelve people on Harker’s Rock. Daniel Donovan was with Mrs Dawson and her children, and there were eight other people near them. The wreck of the Forfarshire was behind them, between them and the lighthouse.

They were nearly dead with wet and cold. Every two minutes, white water fell on them. Daniel had lost his coat, and the wind cut through his thin shirt like a knife. His hands and legs were red with blood. Mrs Dawson was crying and sat with her arms around her two small children. Mr Robb prayed in a loud voice without stopping. Thomas Buchanan and the other men sat together, too cold to move. One man had a broken leg.

The waves got bigger, and the people on the rock moved closer together. After half an hour Mr Robb, the churchman, stopped praying. Daniel looked at him. He was lying on the rock, his face white and cold. His eyes were open, but he did not see Daniel’s hand in front of his face. He was dead.

‘We’ll all be dead soon,’ shouted Thomas Buchanan angrily. ‘No man can live long here, in this wind.’

‘Why don’t they come from the lighthouse to save us?’ shouted James Kelly.

The lighthouse! Daniel remembered it suddenly. ‘We must wave to it!’ he shouted. ‘They can’t see us here!

Come up onto the top of the rock! Wave to them!’

Daniel and James Kelly climbed to the top of the rock, but at first the others did not move - they were too cold, too tired, too frightened. Thomas Buchanan had to hit them and push them to the top of the rock.

The wind was very strong there, so it was difficult to stand. They held onto the rock and shouted and waved at the lighthouse as hard as they could.

No one answered. Behind the wild sea and the rain, the lighthouse stood still and quiet. A few minutes later, the light stopped flashing. But they saw nobody. One by one, the men came down from the top of the rock, and sat with their arms around each other, out of the wind. Only Daniel and Thomas Buchanan stayed on top of the rock. They waved and shouted and cried, but they saw no one. Their faces were as cold as death, and salty and wet from the sea.

Chapter 8. The Worst Sea this Year

Grace saw them first. Her mother was cooking breakfast in the kitchen, and her father was turning off the lantern. Grace was still looking out of her window through the telescope. For a second she saw a man on top of the rock, then she could not see him behind the waves. But a minute later she saw him again - and there were two men this time. They stood together and waved wildly. Then the rain came, and she could see nothing. But perhaps there were four, or five? She put down the telescope and called her father.

‘Father, come quick! There are men on the rock! They are still alive!’

William Darling ran into the room. He saw them. He put down the telescope and looked at his daughter.

‘We must go, lass,’ he said quietly. ‘Yon and I. We must take the boat and save them. Will you come?’

‘Of course, father,’ she said. ‘If we don’t save them, who will?’

‘That’s right, lass.’ William Darling looked out of the window, unhappily. ‘I’ve not seen a worse sea this year. No boat could come from the mainland in this wind.’

Grace's mother came into the room, and heard him. 'You can't go, William!' she said. 'Grace is only a girl. Look at that sea! You'll both drown!'

'We have to try, mother!' said Grace angrily, 'Think, of those poor people, alone on that rock, We live on a lighthouse - it's our job!'

'It's a job for your father and brothers, Grace, not you! You'll drown! How will that help those men?'

'How will it help them if we do nothing?'

Thomasin Darling looked out of the window again, at the wild, angry sea. She shook her head. 'Perhaps you'll get to the rock, Grace,' she said. 'With God's help and the wind behind you, But you'll never get hack against the wind. Nor one man and a girl in a storm like this. Never.'

William Darling took his wife's hands in his. 'Listen to me, Thomasin,' he said. 'There are three or four seamen on that rock. Strong men. They'll help row us back, if we save them.'

'If you save them,' said Thomasin. 'And if you don't...?'

At first William Darling did not answer. He looked into his wife's eyes. 'We're going, Thomasin,' he said quietly, 'We have to go. Come down now and help us with the boat.'

Outside, in the terrible wind and the rain, it took them fifteen minutes to get the boat ready. Three times the waves nearly broke the boat on the rock, William got in first, and sat at the front, Grace and her mother held the boat away from the rocks. William got two oars ready, and waited for the next wave.

'All right, Grace! Get in now!' he shouted.

Grace jumped into the boat, and William pulled hard with the oars. One ... two ... three pulls, and then a wave lifted the boar and the oars were pulling at air. But they were away from the rocks, The boat came down between two waves, and Grace quickly got her oars out. They both pulled hard together, but carefully too. They did nor want to lose an oar in the wild water. Grace was cold and her dress and hat were wet. She was afraid, but happy and excited too. 'This is what God wants me to do,' she thought. At the top of a wave she could easily see across

the Longstone rock to the other side. Then the boat went down between the waves and she could see only mountains of wild water everywhere.

‘Pull left! Left!’ William shouted. ‘We must keep the rocks between us and the worst waves!’

Grace pulled hard at her oars, and watched the waves. ‘God will help us save them!’ she thought happily. ‘I know He will.’

Outside the lighthouse, Thomasin Darling watched the little boat. She saw it for a second, then it went behind a wave, and came up again. ‘It’s not possible,’ she thought. ‘No boat can live in a sea like that! Oh God, please - save my husband and daughter!’

She watched and prayed, and the little boat got smaller and smaller on the wild, grey sea.

Chapter 9. Angel in the Storm

‘Help me, Mr Donovan! Please help!’

‘How can I help you, woman?’ Daniel shouted at Mrs Dawson. ‘How can anyone help?’ He was too cold, too frightened, too tired. He couldn’t think now.

‘Please help my children!’ cried Mrs Dawson. ‘Keep them warm for me - they’re so cold!’

Daniel put his arms around the woman and her children. It was true. The children were cold - very cold. Their eyes were open, but they were not moving. He tried to warm them with his hands. He shook them, but they did not move.

‘It’s no good, woman!’ he said. ‘No one can ...’

‘They’re not dead yet!’ screamed Mrs Dawson. ‘I know they’re not dead!’ She looked into her children’s faces. ‘Wake up, Simon! Sarah! God will save us soon. Please don’t die!’

Daniel was tired and angry. ‘Don’t be stupid, woman!’ he shouted at her. ‘We’re all going to die, don’t you understand? No one knows we’re here!’

Mrs Dawson stared at him. Her face was wet with rain, and her hair was blowing in her eyes.

‘God will said someone!’ she said. ‘He must! I know He will!’

‘Who’s He going to send? An angel?’ Daniel laughed angrily, and looked at the wild, empty sea.

But Mrs Dawson was still screaming. ‘Someone must come!’ she shouted. ‘We can’t die here! Go to the top of the rock and look again! Tell them about my children!’

‘Your children are ...’ But he was afraid to say it. He turned away, angry with himself, and climbed to the top of the rock. The wind screamed in his ears. He looked across to the lighthouse and saw nothing - only waves, and more waves. ‘I hate the sea!’ he thought, it’s like a great grey animal with a hundred white teeth. I hate it! It wants to kill us all!’

And then he saw the boat.

He saw it only for a second. It was on top of a white wave. It went down behind the wave, but then it came up again. Down, and up again. And it was coming nearer! A little boat with two people in it. He held the rock and stared at it. The boat came nearer, and nearer still. Then a great mountain of a wave came, with white angry teeth, and the little boat went down behind it.

‘No!’ Daniel cried. ‘No, please God! No!’

The boat came up on top of the wave, with white water all around it. The oars were up, out of the water. For a second the boat began to turn on its side, then the oars went down into the water and the boat came down the side of the wave. Daniel could see the two people in the boat now. One was a man. One was a young woman.

He got up and ran down the rock. He was crying and laughing at the same time, it’s all right, Mrs Dawson!’ he shouted, ‘It’s all right! Look there! Look! Your angel is coming!’



Chapter 10. Too Many People

Grace looked quickly behind her, and saw the people on the rock. They were waving, shouting, laughing. But there were eight, nine, perhaps ten of them! Too many for this small boat.

She looked back at the waves and pulled hard and carefully with her oars. It was more than a kilometre around the islands from the lighthouse to the ship, and every wave, every rock was different and dangerous. She was tired now, but the job was not finished. The wrecked ship on Marker's Rock was still fifty metres away.

'How many can you see, Grace?' her father shouted. She looked again. 'Ten ... twelve perhaps,' she said, it's too many, father, We'll all drown, if they try to get in.'

'Yes. Put me on the rock, lass, and then take the boat out again,' shouted William, 'I'll talk to them. We can't take more than five, the first time.'

It was very dangerous near the rock. In the best place, the waves went up and down two or three metres every minute, if we make one

mistake,' Grace thought, 'the boat will break into fifty small pieces, and we'll be on the rock with the others.'

Carefully, slowly, Grace and her father tried to get the boat near the rock, but three times they had to pull away at the last minute. Then, the fourth time, William Darling jumped. The passengers pulled him onto the rock,

Grace quickly rowed the boat out to sea again. She was alone in the boat now, and the boat moved differently. She was tired, and her arms and back were hurting. But she knew about boats. 'Watch the sea all the time,' she told herself. 'The waves must meet the front of the boat first, or the boat will turn over. Forget the cold, and the rain, and the wet. God will help me,'

On the rock, William Darling spoke quickly. 'I'm going to take the woman back with me.' he said. 'And that man there, with the broken leg. Then I need three strong men, to help me row the boat.' He looked at Daniel Donovan, and two others. 'You, man, and you, and you. The others must wait here, We'll come back for you later.'

'No, by God! Why me?' shouted James Kelly, 'I want to come now!'

'You're going to stay here, sir!' shouted William angrily. 'Don't you understand? If you get in the boat, we'll all drown!'

'And my children,' cried Mrs Dawson, 'don't forget my children!'

William looked at her unhappily. He held out his arms. 'Give the children to me, mother,' he said.

Carefully, he took the boy and the girl from her, and put the little bodies on the rock, near the sea. They were dead and cold, 'They are in God's hands, mother,' he said. Then he spoke, quickly and quietly to Daniel Donovan. 'When the boat comes, help me get the woman in. We can't take her children.'

Daniel agreed. William put his arm around Mrs Dawson, and waved to Grace.

Carefully, slowly, she rowed the boat in to the rock. It was harder without her father. The wind and the waves moved the boat more quickly, and Grace was very tired now. One mistake meant death for

them all. She came closer - twenty metres, ten, seven, five ... A big wave lifted the boat, then a smaller one behind it. She pulled hard on the oars, and threw a rope to a man on the rock. Then her father got into the boat, with a woman in his arms. She was screaming.

‘My children! Bring the children, please!’

‘No, mother.’ William Darling took the oars. ‘Help her, Grace/

Grace went to the back of the boat with the woman, and held her. Daniel Donovan and two other men got in. They were carrying the man with the broken leg. The front of the boat was very near the rock now - too near. Grace looked behind her, and saw a big wave.

‘Pull, father!’ she shouted. ‘Pull hard!’ She stood up, and pushed against the rock with an oar. The boat was very heavy now, with all these people in it.

William pulled hard with his oars. The big wave came in, and broke into white water all around them. But the boat did not hit the rock. William pulled again, and shouted, ‘You men help me! Take the oars. One each!’

The little boat was very full. The sides were only just above the water, and often the water came in. Grace threw it out with her hat. The wind and waves were against them now, and the four men had to row hard. But slowly, very slowly, the lighthouse came nearer. At last, from the top of the waves, they could see Thomasin Darling. She was standing in front of the lighthouse, and waving to them.

They were very tired when they got to the lighthouse, William and Daniel carried the man with the broken leg into the kitchen, and Grace and her mother helped Mrs Dawson,

Inside the kitchen, William smiled at his daughter. ‘You did a good job, lass,’ he said. ‘Thank you.’

‘I’ll come back again with you, father,’ she said.

‘No,’ he said, ‘You’re too tired. I’ll take two of these.’ He looked at Daniel and the other two men. ‘Which are the strongest?’ he asked.

Daniel was very tired. There was a fire in the kitchen - a warm, beautiful fire. He wanted to lie down in front of the fire and go to sleep

for a long, long time. But William Darling's quiet brown eyes were looking at him.

'I'll come with you,' Daniel said.

'I'll come too,' said Thomas Buchanan.

William Darling smiled. 'Good men,' he said. 'Can you two men row as well as my daughter?'

Daniel looked at Grace, who was busy helping Mrs Dawson. She looked very small, here, in the kitchen-like any young woman. 'I'll try,' he said.

'Right,' said William. 'Come on then.'

So Daniel and Thomas Buchanan followed the old lighthouseman away from the warm kitchen fire, out into the rain and wind again. Daniel looked at the angry sea with its terrible waves, and he felt cold and frightened. He remembered the small young woman alone in the boat by Marker's Rock. 'Great God,' he thought. 'You made that girl strong, like an angel. Make me strong, too, like her.'

The Times

London, 19th September 1838

Mr Darling and his young daughter saved nine people from the wreck of the Forfarshire. The storm lasted for three days, and they stayed all that time with the Darlings in the lighthouse.

Queen Victoria thinks that Grace Darling is one of the finest young women in this country, and she is writing to thank her. One hundred years from now, people will remember this day.

- THE END -

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